Mr John Miltons

CHARACTER

OF THE

Long Parliament

AND

ASSEMBLY of DIVINES

In MDCXLI.

Omitted in his other Works, and never before Printed,
And very seasonable for these times.

LONDON:

Printed for *Henry Brome*, at the *Gun* at the West-end of St. *Pauls*. 1681.

TO THE READER.

THE Reader may take notice, That this Character of Mr. Miltons was a part of his History of Britain, and by him designed to be Printed: But out of tenderness to a Party, [whom neither this nor much more Lenity has had the luck to oblige] it was struck out for some harshness, being only such a Digression, as the History it self would not be discomposed by its omission: which I suppose will be easily discerned, by reading over the beginning of the Third Book of the said History, very near which place this Character is to come in.

It is reported (and from the fore-going Character it seems probable) that Mr. Milton had lent most of his Personal Estate upon the Publick Faith; which when he somewhat earnestly and warmly pressed to have restored [observing how all in Offices had not only feathered their own Nests, but had enricht many of their Relations and Creatures, before the Publick Debts were

diſcharged] after a long and chargeable Attendance, met with very ſharp Rebukes; upon which at laſt deſpairing of any Succeſs in this Affair, he was forced to return from them poor and friendleſs, having ſpent all his Money, and wearied all his Friends. And he had not probably mended his worldly condition in thoſe days, but by performing ſuch Service for them, as afterwards he did, for which ſcarce any thing would appear too great.

Mr.

Mr. *JOHN MILTONS* Character

OF THE

Long Parliament

In 1641.

OF theſe who ſway'd moſt in the late Troubles, few words as to this point may ſuffice. They had Arms, Leaders, and Succeſſes to their wiſh; but to make uſe of ſo great an Advantage was not their skill.

To *other* cauſes therefore, and not to the want of Force, or Warlick Manhood in the *Britains*, both thoſe, and theſe lately, we muſt impute the ill Husbanding of thoſe fair Opportunities, which might ſeem to have put Liberty ſo long deſired, like a Bridle into their hands. Of which other cauſes equally belonging to Ruler, Prieſt, and People, above hath been related: which, as they brought *thoſe Antient Natives* to Miſery and Ruine, by Liberty, which, rightly uſed, might have made them happy; ſo brought they *theſe of late*, after many Labours, much Blood-ſhed, and vaſt expence,

pence, to Ridiculous Fruſtration: in whom the like defects, the like Miſcarriages notoriouſly appeared, with Vices not leſs hateful or inexcuſable.

For a Parliament being call'd, to Redreſs many things, as 'twas thought, the People with great Courage, and expectation to be eaſed of what Diſcontented them, choſe to their behoof in Parliament, ſuch as they thought beſt affected to the Publick Good, and ſome indeed Men of *Wiſdom* and *Integrity*; the reſt, [to be ſure the greater part,] whom Wealth or ample Poſſeſſions, or bold and active Ambition [rather than Merit] had commended to the ſame place.

But when once the ſuperficial Zeal and Popular Fumes that acted their *New Magiſtracy* were cool'd, and ſpent in them, ſtraight every one betook himſelf, ſetting the Common-wealth behind, his private Ends before, to do as his own profit or ambition led him. Then was Juſtice delayed, and ſoon after deny'd: Spight and Favour determined all: Hence Faction, thence Treachery, both at home and in the Field: Every where Wrong, and Oppreſſion: Foul and Horrid Deeds committed daily, or maintain'd, in ſecret, or in open. Some who had been called

led from Shops and Ware-houſes, without other Merit, to ſit in Supreme Councels and Committees, [as their Breeding was] fell to Huckſter the Common-wealth. Others did thereafter as Men could ſooth and humour them beſt; ſo he who would give moſt, or under Covert of Hypocritical Zeal, inſinuate baſeſt, enjoyed unworthily the Rewards of Learning and Fidelity; or eſcaped the puniſhment of his Crimes and Miſdeeds. Their Votes and Ordinances, which Men lookt ſhould have contained the Repealing of Bad Laws, and the immediate Conſtiturion of better, reſounded with nothing elſe, but new Impoſitions, Taxes, Exciſes; Yearly, Monthly, Weekly. Not to reckon the Offices, Gifts, and Preferments beſtowed and ſhared among themſelves: They in the mean while, who were ever faithfulleſt to this Cauſe, and freely aided them in Perſon, or with their Subſtance, when they durſt not compel either, ſlighted, and bereaved after, of their juſt Debts by greedy Sequeſtrations, were toſſed up and down after miſerable Attendance from one Committee to another with Petitions in their hands, yet either miſt the obtaining of their ſuit, or though it were at length granted, [mere ſhame and reaſon oft-times extorting

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from them at leaſt a ſhew of Juſtice] yet by their Sequeſtratours and Sub-committees abroad, Men for the moſt part of inſatiable hands, and noted Diſloyalty, thoſe Orders were commonly diſobeyed: which for certain durſt not have been, without ſecret complyance, if not compact with ſome Superiours able to bear them out. Thus were their Friends confiſcate in their Enemies, while they forfeited their Debtours to the State, as they called it, but indeed to the Ravening Seizure of innumerable Thieves in Office: Yet were withal no leſs burthened in all extraordinary Aſſeſments and Oppreſſions, than thoſe whom they took to be diſaffected: Nor were we happier Creditours to what we call'd the State, than to them who were Sequeſtred as the States Enemies.

For that Faith which ought to have been kept as Sacred and Inviolable as any thing holy, *The Publick Faith*, after infinite Sums received, and all the Wealth of the Church not better imploy'd, but ſwallowed up into a private *Gulph*, was not ere long aſhamed to confeſs Bankrupt. And now beſides the ſweetneſs of Bribery, and other gain, with the love of Rule, their own Guiltineſs, and the dreaded name

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of *juſt Account*, which the People had long call'd for, diſcovered plainly that there were of their own number, who ſecretly contrived and fomented thoſe Troubles and Combuſtions in the Land, which openly they ſate to remedy; and would continually finde ſuch work, as ſhould keep them from being ever brought to that *Terrible ſtand*, of laying down their Authority for lack of new buſineſs, or not drawing it out to any length of Time, tho' upon the Ruine of a whole Nation.

And if the *State* were in this plight, *Religion* was not in much better; to Reform which, a certain number of Divines were called, neither choſen by any Rule or Cuſtome Eccleſiaſtical, nor eminent for either Piety or Knowledge above others left out; only as each Member of Parliament in his private Fancy thought fit, ſo elected one by one. The moſt part of them were ſuch, as had Preach'd and cryed down, with great ſhew of Zeal, the Avarice and Pluralities of Biſhops and Prelates; that one Cure of Souls was a full Employment for one Spiritual Paſtour how able ſoever, if not a charge rather above humane ſtrength. Yet theſe Conſci-

entious men (ere any part of the work done for which they came together, and that on the Publick Salary) wanted not boldneſs, to the Ignominy and Scandal of their Paſtor-like Profeſſion, and eſpecially of their boaſted Reformation, to ſeize into their hands, or not unwillingly to accept [beſides one, ſometimes two or more of the beſt Livings] Collegiate Maſterſhips in the Univerſities, rich Lectures in the City, ſetting Sail to all Winds that might blow Gain into their covetous Boſoms: By which means theſe great Rebukers of Non-Reſidence, among ſo many diſtant Cures, were not aſhamed to be ſeen ſo quickly Pluraliſts and Non-Reſidents themſelves, to a fearful Condemnation doubtleſs by their own Mouths. And yet the main Doctrine for which they took ſuch pay, and inſiſted upon with more vehemence than Goſpel, was but to tell us in effect, that their Doctrine was worth nothing, and the Spiritual Power of their Miniſtry leſs available than Bodily Compulſion; perſwading the Magiſtrate to uſe it, as a ſtronger means to ſubdue and bring in Conſcience, than Evangelical perſwaſion: Diſtruſting the Virtue of their own Spiritual weapons, which were given them,

them, if they be rightly called, with full warrant of ſufficiency to pull down all thoughts and imaginations that exalt themſelves againſt God. But while they taught compulſion without convincement, which not long before they complained of, as executed unchriſtianly, againſt themſelves, theſe intents are clear to have been no better than Antichriſtian: ſetting up a Spiritual Tyranny by a Secular power, to the advancing of their own Authority above the Magiſtrate, whom they would have made their Executioner, to puniſh Church-Delinquencies, whereof Civil Laws have no cognizance.

And well did their Diſciples manifeſt themſelves to be no better principled than their Teachers, truſted with Committeeſhips and other gainful Offices, upon their commendations for Zealous, [and as they ſtickt not to term them] Godly men; but executing their places like Children of the Devil, unfaithfully, unjuſtly, unmercifully, and where not corruptly, ſtupidly. So that between them the Teachers, and theſe the Diſciples, there hath not been a more ignominious and mortal wound to Faith, to Piety, to the work of Reformation,

nor more cauſe of Blaſpheming given to the Enemies of God and Truth, ſince the firſt Preaching of Reformation.

The People therefore looking one while on the Statiſts, whom they beheld without conſtancy or firmneſs, labouring doubtfully beneath the weight of their own too high undertakings, buſieſt in petty things, trifling in the main, deluded and quite alienated, expreſſed divers ways their diſaffection; ſome deſpiſing whom before they honoured, ſome deſerting, ſome inveighing, ſome conſpiring againſt them. Then looking on the *Church-men*, whom they ſaw under ſubtle Hypocriſie to have Preached their own Follies, moſt of them not the Goſpel, Time-ſervers, Covetous, Illiterate Perſecutors, not lovers of the Truth, like in moſt things whereof they accuſed their Predeceſſors: Looking on all this, the People which had been kept warm a while with the counterfeit zeal of their Pulpits, after a falſe heat, became more cold and obdurate than before, ſome turning to Lewdneſs, ſome to flat Atheiſm, put beſide their old Religion, and foully ſcandalized in what they expected ſhould be new.

Thus

Thus they who of late were extoll'd as our greateſt Deliverers, and had the People wholly at their Devotion, by ſo diſcharging their Truſt as we ſee, did not only weaken and unfit themſelves to be diſpenſers of what Liberty they pretended, but unfitted alſo the People, now grown worſe and more diſordinate, to receive or to digeſt any Liberty at all. For Stories teach us, that Liberty ſought out of ſeaſon, in a corrupt and degenerate Age, brought *Rome* itſelf into a farther Slavery: For Liberty hath a ſharp and double edge, fit only to be handled by Juſt and Vertuous Men; to bad and diſſolute, it becomes a miſchief unweildy in their own hands: neither is it compleatly given, but by them who have the happy skill to know what is grievance, and unjuſt to a People, and how to remove it wiſely; what good Laws are wanting, and how to frame them ſubſtantially, that good Men may enjoy the freedom which they merit, and the bad the Curb which they need. But to do this, and to know theſe exquiſite proportions, the *Heroick Wiſdom* which is required, ſurmounted far the Principles of theſe narrow Politicians: what wonder then if they ſunk as theſe unfortunate *Britains* before them, entangled and oppreſt with things too

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hard, and generous above their ſtrain and temper ? For *Britain*, to ſpeak a truth not often ſpoken, as it is a Land fruitful enough of Men ſtout and courageous in War, ſo is it naturally not over-fertile of Men able to govern juſtly and prudently in Peace, truſting only in their Mother-Wit ; who conſider not juſtly, that Civility, Prudence, love of the Publick good, more than of Money or vain Honour, are to this Soyl in a manner Outlandiſh ; grow not here, but in minds well implanted with ſolid and elaborate Breeding, too impolitick elſe and rude, if not headſtrong and intractable to the induſtry and vertue either of executing or underſtanding true Civil Government. Valiant indeed, and proſperous to win a field ; but to know the end and Reaſon of winning, unjudicious and unwiſe : in good or bad Succeſs alike unteachable. For the Sun which we want, ripens Wits as well as Fruits ; and as Wine and Oyl are Imported to us from abroad : ſo muſt ripe Underſtanding, and many civil Vertues, be imported into our minds from Forreign Writings, and examples of beſt Ages, we ſhall elſe miſcarry ſtill, and come ſhort in the attempts of any great Enterpiſe. Hence did their Victories prove as fruitleſs, as their loſſes

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dangerous ; and left them ſtill conquering under the ſame grievances, that men ſuffer conquered : which was indeed unlikely to go otherwiſe , unleſs men more than vulgar bred up, as few of them were, in the knowledge of Antient and Illuſtrious Deeds , invincible againſt many and vain Titles, impartial to Friendſhips and Relations , had conducted their Affairs : but then from the Chapman to the Retailer , many whoſe Ignorance was more audacious than the reſt, were admitted with all their forDid Rudiments to bear no mean ſway among them, both in Church and State.

From the confluence of all their Errors, Miſchiefs, and Miſdemeanous, what in the eyes of Man could be expected , but what befel thoſe Antient Inhabitants whom they ſo much reſembled, Confuſion in the end ?

But on theſe things, and this Parallel, having enough inſiſted , I return to the ſtory which gave us matter of this Digreſſion.

FINIS.

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